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RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EEB/TRA/AN, WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAIR](#) [KTIA](#) [TD](#)
SUBJECT: GOTT UNABLE TO PURSUE BILATERAL OPEN SKIES

REF: Port of Spain 55

11. SUMMARY: Due to the decision by CARICOM leaders in July 2007 to pursue a "coordinated response" to open skies, the GOTT is unable to entertain the USG's proposal for a bilateral open skies agreement. However, a GOTT representative indicated that open skies is a priority for the Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry plans to encourage CARICOM to take action. END SUMMARY

12. In correspondence dated July 18, 2008, the Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT) indicated that while it is interested in continuing to develop its air transport relations with the U.S., it is unable to pursue a bilateral Open Skies Agreement with the USG. The letter states that at the 28th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in July 2007, leaders decided CARICOM should pursue a "coordinated response to the United States with respect to the resumption of consultations" on open skies. According to the letter, leaders at the 28th meeting also decided that the CARICOM Secretariat would convene a seminar or workshop "to consider issues relating to open skies regimes". However, the correspondence offers no indication as to whether such a seminar/workshop has occurred or is being planned.

13. In a follow up conversation with EconOff, Sonia Frances Yearwood, the Senior Planning Officer in the MOWT and the Ministry's representative on GOTT's Standing Negotiating Committee on Air Services, indicated there has been no follow up by CARICOM on the issue. However, she felt there was positive sentiment among CARICOM nations for open skies. She highlighted the fact that at the July 2008 Heads of Government meeting in Antigua a decision was made to convene a special CARICOM session on transport and tourism as soon as possible.

14. According to Yearwood, open skies is a priority for the MOWT. The GOTT is interested in seeing a decision from CARICOM that would enable it to move forward on the issue. Yearwood said that the GOTT plans to lobby CARICOM's transport body in an effort to encourage dialogue and an eventual decision on open skies.

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